A/AC.172/1993/CRP.14/Add.4
20 May 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
Substantive session
Agenda item 12*

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Imre KARBUCZKY (Hungary)

Addendum

I. CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS (continued)

E. Consideration of the draft calendar of conferences and meetings of subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council for 1994-1995

Introduction and overview

1. In its decision 1988/103 of 5 February 1988, the Economic and Social Council invited the Committee on Conferences to review the Council's draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings and to submit, as appropriate, its recommendations thereon to the Council.

2. At its 351st meeting, on 20 May 1993, the Committee on Conferences discussed the aforementioned draft calendar (A/AC.172/1993/CRP.13 and E/1993/L.20).

Discussion

3. Concern was expressed regarding the increased requests of intergovernmental bodies to seek exceptions to the biennialization of their sessions, particularly in view of the fact that such requests did not result in sessions of shorter

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A/AC.172/150/Add.1.

duration and were contrary to recommendation 2 (b) of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations.

4. Clarification was sought and received from the Secretariat regarding various aspects of the provisional calendar of conferences and meetings for 1994 and 1995 in the economic, social and related fields.

Conclusions and recommendations

5. The Committee on Conferences noted that, in accordance with Council resolution 1988/77 of 29 July 1988, paragraph 2 (f) (i), in the draft calendar submitted by the Secretary-General, the subsidiary bodies of the Council were, to the extent possible, scheduled to end their 1994-1995 sessions at least eight weeks prior to the scheduled dates for the Economic and Social Council.

6. The Committee wished to encourage the Council to continue its consideration of the biennialization of meetings of its subsidiary bodies.

7. The Committee noted with appreciation the action taken by the Council in 1992 concerning the discontinuance of summary records for its sessional committees, as well as for some subsidiary bodies.

8. The Committee recommended the adoption of the draft calendar of the Economic and Social Council as presented, while noting that the venues of some bodies affected by the restructuring under General Assembly resolution 47/212 B of 6 May 1993 was subject to review.

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COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
Substantive session
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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Imre KARBUCZKY (Hungary)

Addendum

II. IMPROVED COORDINATION OF CONFERENCES WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM: IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 43/222 B, PARAGRAPH 4 (f)

Introduction and overview

1. At its 300th meeting, on 24 August 1989, the Committee agreed that it should examine how it could best address its terms of reference as governed by paragraph 4 (f) of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B and requested the Secretariat to examine the current status of coordination, identifying any difficulties or problems and suggesting possible solutions with a view to making the necessary improvements. The Committee further requested its Chairman to address a letter to the Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in order to avail itself of the opportunity to benefit from that Committee's views. Subsequently, the Organizational Committee of ACC decided to refer the matter to the Inter-Agency Meeting for Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP).

2. At its 328th meeting, on 19 August 1991, the Committee took note of the progress report provided by the Secretariat. At its 349th and 350th meetings, on 19 May 1993, the Committee on Conferences reviewed a report on the item, including information on action taken by ACC (A/AC.172/1993/CRP.3).

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* A/AC.172/150/Add.1.

93-29640 (E)

Discussion

3. The Secretariat indicated that inter-agency coordination and consultation, including the systematic exchange of information and language staff, were in place in the United Nations system, particularly at duty stations where a number of specialized agencies were located.

4. The Committee noted that the primary focus in terms of coordination was appropriate at the regional level, and that such coordination, including thematic coordination, would ensure the effective participation by Member States at meetings, as well as optimize the use of scarce conference-servicing resources. Such coordination should be furthered. In that connection, an appropriate computerized information system, particularly at Geneva, where a large number of specialized agencies are based, should be developed to allow information regarding schedules of meetings to be readily available.

5. The organization of world conferences should take into account the capacities of Member States and of the system.

6. The Committee noted that conclusions presented in the paper were valid, and welcomed exchanges of permanent language staff among agencies as a factor in the cost-effective use of permanent conference staff, although such an arrangement would not necessarily obviate the need for additional freelance staff, as the number of staff that could be loaned was probably limited.

7. It was agreed that the Secretary-General should be requested to call upon the specialized agencies to pursue system-wide coordination.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. The Committee noted with appreciation the level of coordination within the United Nations system, especially at given duty stations, and the agreement reached with regard to establishing a systematic exchange of information and language staff within the system to promote effective utilization of conference staff.

9. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that it should request the Secretary-General as Chairman of ACC, through the established mechanism of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications, to encourage further system-wide coordination of conference activities including coordination of meetings schedules with a view to optimizing the use of available conference services, resources and facilities, with due regard to quality, as well as ensuring the effective participation of Member States, and to report on the results achieved to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session through the Committee on Conferences.

10. The Committee also wishes to emphasize that any decisions to convene world conferences should take into account the impact of such conferences on the capacity of the United Nations system to provide conference services as well as the capacity of Member States to participate in them.

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19 May 1993

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COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Imre KARBUCZKY (Hungary)

Addendum

III. CONTROL AND LIMITATION OF DOCUMENTATION

A. Provision of written meetings records to subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly

Introduction and overview

1. In its resolution 36/117 A, the General Assembly requested the Committee on Conferences to undertake a comprehensive study of the rationale underlying the provision of meeting records to United Nations organs. Having considered the report of the Committee, the Assembly, in its resolution 37/14 C, decided that, for an experimental period of three years, no subsidiary organ of the Assembly should be entitled to summary records, with the seven exceptions laid down in that resolution.

2. That experimental period was subsequently extended until 31 December 1990 by General Assembly resolutions 40/243, 41/177 D and 44/196 B. In its resolution 45/238 B of 21 December 1990, the General Assembly decided, pending a further decision of the Assembly on the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences, that no subsidiary organ of the Assembly would be entitled to summary records with the exception of the seven bodies laid down in resolution 37/14 C. The Assembly also decided that summary records would continue to be provided to regular and special sessions of the following governing bodies: the

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* A/AC.172/150/Add.1.

Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

3. In paragraph 14 of its resolution 47/202 B of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly welcomed the decision of the Committee on Conferences to review the criteria for, status of and guidelines on the provision of written meeting records, and requested the Committee, taking into account the costs of conference-servicing, to report thereon to the General Assembly with concrete recommendations at its forty-eighth session. In paragraph 18 of the same resolution, the Assembly also requested the Secretariat to pursue the possibility of issuing the verbatim records of the Security Council in final form only, on the understanding that those records would be issued as promptly as the provisional ones are issued at present.

4. At its 347th meeting, on 18 May 1993, the Committee on Conferences reviewed a report concerning the criteria, status and guidelines on the provision of written meeting records (A/AC.172/1993/CRP.6) and a report on the possibility of issuing the verbatim records of the Security Council in final form only (A/AC.172/1993/CRP.7).

Discussion

5. The Secretariat observed that the two criteria established by the General Assembly for the provision of summary records to a body were that its subject-matter should be sufficiently substantive and that the cost should be in proportion to the benefit derived. The Office of Conference Services was experiencing some difficulty in the production of summary records, and sought the Committee's guidance in that connection. The possibility was being considered of issuing verbatim records of the Security Council in final form only.

6. The Committee expressed the view that meeting records should be provided for political and legal bodies, while others should reconsider their need for records. Although sound recordings might be considered as an alternative, their use would not reflect the rationale underlying written records. Despite the delays in the issuance of summary records, they were of value, particularly for smaller delegations. While delays could be reduced if records were initially issued in the original language version without waiting for translation into other languages, such a practice would violate the principle of simultaneous distribution.

7. Notwithstanding the introduction of technological innovations, increased workload and reduced staffing within the Office of Conference Services meant that it would have to be strengthened in the next biennium if meeting records were to be issued as expected. Another possibility was to curtail the overall volume of documentation.

8. The Secretariat provided clarification of a number of points raised in the conference room papers. There would be some easing of the resource situation if the posts frozen in the Office of Conference Services were restored.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee reaffirmed that written meeting records were necessary for some bodies of a political or legal nature and were important in the work of delegations.

10. Bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 45/238 B, the Committee recommended that the General Assembly should instruct all bodies currently entitled to written meeting records to review the need for such records, with a view to deciding whether they should be discontinued or maintained for some or all of their meetings. Should a body conclude that its records should be maintained, it should make a recommendation to that effect to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session through the Committee on Conferences with appropriate justification.

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COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
Substantive session
Agenda item 12*

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Imre KARBUCZKY (Hungary)

Addendum

III. CONTROL AND LIMITATION OF DOCUMENTATION (continued)

B. Implementation of the rules and regulations on control and limitation of documentation: compliance with the six-week rule for the issuance of pre-session documentation

Introduction and overview

1. At its 336th meeting, on 24 August 1992, the Committee on Conferences considered a report on Secretariat compliance with the six-week rule for issuance of pre-session documentation (A/AC.172/1992/CRP.5).

2. The Committee, inter alia, decided to repeat and strongly confirm its insistence on full compliance with the six-week rule. By paragraph 12 of resolution 47/202 B of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly urged subsidiary organs to review their agendas with a view to enabling the Secretariat's compliance with the six-week rule, inter alia, through combining agenda items and limiting requests for pre-session documentation, and requested the Secretary-General to inform the subsidiary organs of that appeal and to report orally to the Committee on Conferences on the measures taken to that effect.

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* A/AC.172/150/Add.1.

3. At its 347th and 350th meetings, on 18 and 19 May 1993, the Committee considered an interim report on the matter (A/AC.172/1993/CRP.8) on the understanding that supplementary information would be presented at its 1994 substantive session.

Discussion

4. The Secretariat stated that the conference room paper was an interim report only, outlining the problems faced by the Office of Conference Services owing to the increase in the volume of documentation and the late submission of documents by author departments. There was a need for closer coordination and dialogue with those departments.

5. The Committee noted that a serious situation existed regarding the timely issuance of documentation, due to increased workload, late submission by author departments and inadequate resources, and expressed the view that the problem must be tackled at the first stage of the process with greater accountability on the part of those responsible for documentation. Incentives to encourage compliance with the 10-week rule should be identified. Late submissions should not be accorded priority over timely submissions.

6. Adequate permanent staffing and resources must be provided for the Office of Conference Services. The management of workload, coordination and training were important, and the approaches outlined in sections III and IV of the paper should be developed further.

7. In order to ensure full compliance with the six-week rule by the Secretariat, Member States as members of intergovernmental bodies should, under an appropriate existing agenda item, review agendas seeking to combine items so as to effect an overall reduction in requests for documentation.

8. The Secretariat clarified points arising in the discussion, and noted that proposals for additional resources would be prepared for the next biennium. It was hoped to place greater emphasis on training and coordination to bring about an improvement in submissions and in the overall situation.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee took note of the preliminary findings and recommendations as contained in sections III and IV of the conference room paper.

10. The Committee encouraged the Secretariat to strengthen the training function exclusively for those responsible for the preparation of parliamentary documentation and the planning and forecasting functions in both author departments and the Office of Conference Services. The Committee reiterated the need for adequate resources in order to deal with the growing workload and to make it possible to better comply with the deadlines set by the General Assembly for the submission of documentation.

11. The Committee requested the Office of Conference Services to identify incentives in order to ensure compliance on the part of substantive departments

with the 10-week rule and to report to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session on measures taken and on the impact of the implementation of this rule.

12. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that it should invite intergovernmental bodies and their members to review their agendas with a view to enabling the Secretariat to comply with the six-week rule, inter alia, through combining agenda items, and to limit requests for pre-session documentation.

13. The Committee requested the Secretariat to proceed with the report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session as outlined in the conference room paper, taking into account the views expressed during the discussion.

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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Imre Karbuczky (Hungary)

Addendum

IV. MEETINGS OF ORGANS AND PROGRAMMES NOT FUNDED FROM THE REGULAR BUDGET OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Introduction and overview

1. In paragraph 19 of its resolution 46/190 of 20 December 1991, the General Assembly requested the Committee on Conferences to continue to monitor the meetings and services provided to organs and programmes not funded from the regular budget and to consider the impact of their scheduling on the calendar of conferences and meetings.

2. In paragraph 9 of its resolution 47/202 A of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly invited the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to continue to evaluate their meeting and documentation requirements, with a view to rationalizing them, and to report on progress thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session, through the Committee on Conferences.

3. At its 345th and 348th meetings, on 17 and 18 May 1993, the Committee on Conferences considered the matter on the basis of two reports (A/AC.172/1993/CRP.1 and A/AC.172/1993/CRP.2).

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* A/AC.172/150/Add.1.

Discussion

4. The view was expressed that the governing bodies of UNDP and UNICEF should be encouraged to continue their efforts with a view to reducing the number of meetings and the volume of documentation.

5. Clarification was sought and received from the Secretariat regarding the electronic transfer of documentation of the Executive Board of UNICEF. It was suggested that the equal treatment of all official languages should be borne in mind in the implementation of such a procedure, that the six-week rule for availability of pre-session documentation should be respected and that the quality of conference services should not be impaired.

6. In reply to a query concerning additional staff to meet the requirements of the Governing Council of UNDP, the representative of UNDP indicated that some reimbursement was made by UNDP to the United Nations Secretariat in respect of overtime and contractual translation costs. The representative of the Secretariat noted that it was usual to hire additional staff when the two subsidiary bodies met, as their meetings were scheduled at particularly busy times of the year for the Organization as a whole.

7. In reply to another query, the Secretariat noted that, in accordance with the rules of procedure of each body, summary records were prepared in the working languages only. The view was expressed that due respect should be paid to the equal treatment of all official languages of the United Nations in the summary records of UNDP and UNICEF. It was also suggested that the two governing bodies could dispense with summary records.

8. The Secretariat also replied to a query regarding 1993 statistics for the Executive Board of UNICEF.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee on Conferences took note of the efforts undertaken by the Governing Council of UNDP and the Executive Board of UNICEF to rationalize their meeting and documentation requirements.

10. It decided to recommend to the General Assembly that it should invite the two subsidiary bodies, within the context of the restructuring exercise in the economic and social sectors, to increase their efforts to rationalize their meeting and documentation requirements with a view to reducing them to the maximum extent possible.

11. The Committee considered that the Governing Council of UNDP and the Executive Board of UNICEF could possibly dispense with summary records. Therefore, it decided to recommend that the General Assembly should invite those bodies to consider doing so. Otherwise, those records should be prepared with due respect for the equal treatment of all official languages of the United Nations in accordance with General Assembly resolution 42/207 C of 11 December 1987.

12. The Committee, taking account of the decision of the Executive Board of UNICEF that the Executive Director should undertake a technical and financial analysis of the electronic transfer of Executive Board documentation, wished to draw the attention of the Executive Board to the fact that that decision should be implemented taking into account the need to ensure the equal treatment of all official languages, pursuant to resolution 42/207 C, the need to comply with the six-week rule for availability of pre-session documentation and the need to ensure that the quality of conference services is not impaired.

13. The Committee further decided to continue to monitor the conference services provided to organs and programmes not funded from the regular budget of the United Nations.